

MORAL
CONSIDERATIONS
TOUCHING
The DUTY of
CONTENTEDNESS
UNDER
Afflictions.

In a LETTER to the most
Affectionate and Best of
FATHERS
Mr. JAMES SIMPSON.

By RICH. SIMPSON.

OXFORD,
Printed by L. Lichfield, 1686.

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Touching the Duty of

CONTENTEDNESS

under AFFLICTIONS.

Dear Sir,

A Midst all my Afflictions, nothing troubles me so much, as that, by the disappointment of my hopes in this place, I am like to continue still incapable of paying some part of the Duty I owe You in a way suitable to my Education. I mean, of giving you some handsome Evidence of my Improvement in my Studies. A thing I have always infinitely desired; having perhaps the greatest obligation to you that ever any Son in the world had to a Father. But in the Circumstances I am now in, cut off from the advantages of the *Foundation*, I must despair of

doing any great matters in the way of a Scholar. All my concern is what I shall want in Intellectuals, to make up in Morals; and tho I may not be a great *Clerk*, yet to approve my self, in the whole course of my Life and Actions, as I hope I have hitherto done, a dutiful Son, an honest Man, and a good Christian.

Sir, In your last you were pleas'd to order me to send you some Considerations of my own Penning, touching *Contentedness under Afflictions*. I have very readily obey'd your Commands; and such poor indegested Collections as I could make upon this Subject, in the great trouble I am under, I now send you, wishing they may contribute something to your Satisfaction and Comfort.

Tho I am sensible in handling this Argument I shall fall far short
of

of my wishes, yet I have done (as under all the Obligations of Duty and Gratitude I am bound) what I could to please and satisfy you, being still desirous (tho unable) in some measure to be a Comfort to you, and to contribute something to the Content and Happiness of your Life. I have chosen rather to deserve a check for my bad performance, than for my neglect; and had rather you should be sorry for my weakness, than my disobedience.

Tho, I must confess I can expect nothing but Candour and Kindness from you, in reference to what is here offer'd you, purely in obedience to your Commands; & look for no worse censure from the Tenderneſs of a Parent, then they usually have that are making their first Essays under a Writing-master, whose first Copies, (tho
 A 3 the

the Letters are awkwardly made and crooked) are smiled upon, not blam'd, rather pitied than reprov'd. Now as I hope you will favourably look upon this ruffled, undressed piece, and so lay it by; so I must earnestly intreat you not to shew it to any curious eye, not to expose your son's imperfections to any Critical or Censorious persons, for you see 'tis huddled up in a short time, and wants all the Beauty and Ornaments of Method and Language.

My retiredness and solitude (which I take a great delight in) has given me time and leisure, for the thoughts I here set down, and my late misfortune abundantly supply'd me with Subject-matter for them. So that most of the Considerations I here present you with, are what every assault of grief, every sad reflection upon my
late

late disappointment here in the Colledge put me upon, whereby I endeavour to settle and compose my mind, to fit my self as well for the sincerity of Chamber and Chappel-Devotion, (a great part whereof you know consists in hearty Thanksgiving;) as for the Company and Society of my Friends and Acquaintance. And I pray God these may prevail more, at least as much, upon you, as they have upon me.

You desired a Letter of Advice and Comfort under your present pressure and Trouble, or some *Considerations touching the Duty of Contentedness under Afflictions.* I have here (I say) ventured upon something in order to your satisfaction. I shall not, dare not, yet meddle with any thing of *Divinity*, but design only to let you see how

how strong and forcibly perswasive bare Morality is in this Point. And that I may not arrogate to my self more than I ought, nor be justly condemned for a *Plagiary*, I hold my self bound here ingenuously to acknowledge, that much of what is here deliver'd, has been borrowed from the Elaborate works of the more Learn'd Hea-then-Moralists, Latine and Greek Authors, who have writ upon this Subject, so that a great part of my small pains in this business, has been to Collect, Translate, and Methodize their Morality.

The Ancient Moralists do usually teach and enforce the *Duty of Patience and Contentedness under Afflictions.*

1. By shewing the necessity of subduing and regulating the Passions, (those great disturbers of the

the quiet & serenity of the Soul,) and consequently of acquiring a constant peace and tranquility of mind, and of living comfortably and contentedly under all conditions and circumstances of life. For if the irregularity of Passion, be the grand cause of Discontent, and if (which is certain) the removal of the *Cause* be at all times the removal of the *Effect* too, then the Inference is plain and clear, That a due Government and Regulation of our Passions, as it takes away all struggling, disturbance and discomposure of Spirit, so it leaves us in a quiet possession of our own Souls in internal peace and tranquility of mind.

2. They enforce this Duty by laying down the necessity of Obedience and Submission to Almighty God, in all the several dispensations of his Providence, as to the

Crea-

Creatour and Governour of the
 World. For all the Heathen Mo-
 ralists allowing the Existence of a
 God, (a Natural Principle, and
 known to all men) they conclu-
 ded him to be *Infinitely Wise, Good*
and Powerful : And from every
 one of these Attributes they de-
 duc'd a necessity of submission to,
 and acquiescence in his pleasure,
 as to the disposal of all things in
 the world, *viz.* In respect of his
 Omnipotence, we ought to submit
 to his Will out of plain and abso-
 lute Duty and necessity ; In refe-
 rence to his Infinite Wisdom, we
 ought to do it in point of Pru-
 dence ; In reference to Infinite
 Goodness, we ought to do it in
 point of Gratitude.

This is the Absolute and Ne-
 cessary Duty of every Rational
 Creature to Subdue and Regulate
 the

the Passions, (those great disturbers of the peace and quiet of the soul) and consequently to be Patient, and Content in all Conditions and Circumstances of life. For 'tis undeniably true, that if the due Order and Government of Passion removes all trouble and tumult, and disquietness of mind from a man, then it leaves him in the enjoyment of all peace, tranquillity and serenity imaginable, *i. e.* gives him Patience and Content. For what is Quietness and Tranquillity of mind under Crosses and Sufferings but *Patience*? What is Peace and Serenity of Soul under the loss of Friends, Estate, Credit, &c. but *Contentedness*? I shall therefore proceed to let you see distinctly,

1. That the Irregularity of our Passions does really create all these troubles and disquiets, under
Crosses

Crosses and Disappointments which give men so much unhappy disturbance and uneasiness, in their several Conditions; or that it is the Great Cause of Discontent.

2. That 'tis the absolute and necessary Duty of every Rational Creature, to Rule, Govern, and Discipline these Passions; to use his utmost Care and Endeavour, to bring them to a continued subjection to his *Reason* and *Judgment*; and so introduce with ease into his Soul, a due, Comfortable and Sanctified use of all Conditions; in Prosperity, Thankfulness and Sobriety; in Adversity Contentedness and Humility; in all, *Moderation*;

1. The Inordinacy of Passion is the great Cause of Discontent. This I take to be so certainly and universally true that it may pass for

for an *Axiom*, or one of those truths we call *First Principles*, so as to need no demonstration or proof.

The great evil of suffering is not so much in the thing a man suffers, as in the mind and temper of the man, who meets with it. Impatience and discontent come not so much from the strength and force of any External Calamity, as from the great Struggling, and reluctancy of the mind that suffers it. For take a humble, and moderate man, free from Pride, Haughtiness, Covetousness and Ambition, how easily and softly do Crosses and Troubles fall upon him? With how much evenness and equality of temper does he receive Calamities and Afflictions, when God pleases to send them. The Reason is, his thoughts are prepared and qualified for it; he

he is master of himself, and his
 Passions; never transported or
 hurried beyond what becomes a
 Reasonable man; is all quiet with-
 in; does always possess and enjoy
 himself in a happy peace and se-
 renity of soul. a constant settled
 composure of spirit. On the contra-
 ry, a Proud and Lofty man, swoln
 with the conceit of his own worth
 & goodness, how does he stomach
 & rise at the least disappointment,
 Into what desperate rage and
 choler does he throw himself upon
 any cross or misfortune that be-
 falls him? He thinks Heaven
 obliged to favour his great me-
 rits and gratify his humour. And
 if dishonour, reproach, poverty,
 loss of estate or reputation, chance
 to happen to him, how much
 trouble and tumult, disturbance &
 discomposure arises in the mind
 hereupon? How does the rage and
 boilings

boylings of such an ones haughty,
 ambitious, and distemper'd spirit
 raise a storm within him, that
 may possibly endanger the whole
 man; his struggling galls worse
 than the Yoke it self otherwise
 would do; and he himself con-
 tributes infinitely more to his
 own uneasiness, than his Affliction
 doth. Again, 'tis the over-value
 we put upon Worldly goods, and
 the seeming blessings, and conve-
 niencies they yield us, that gives
 us so much trouble and torment
 in the loss of them. What infinite
 disorders of mind do our extra-
 vagant desires and longings after
 Riches create in us? What care
 and trouble to get them? What
 anxiety and restless fear lest we
 should loose them, when got?
 What infinite strugglings and
 shiftings to keep them when they
 are going? And what extream vex-
 ation,

ation, sorrow and affliction when they are gone? So likewise 'tis the excess of love we undeservedly place upon our health, pleasure, reputation, greatness, honours, or the like, that makes us so unable to bear the loss of them, by sickness, reproach, poverty, or false friends, with that patience and quietness of mind which we ought. 'Twas *Ahab's* Covetousness, that made him troubled, and sick, for a small Parcel of his Neighbours ground. 'Twas *Haman's* pride, ambition, and excessive love of Honour that made him afflicted and discontented for the want of poor *Mordecai's* Knee. Whereas if our desires of things here below were reasonable and moderate, we should be little or nothing concern'd in the want, or loss of them: for it cannot greatly trouble

ble a man to part with what he never greatly cared for.

Now 'tis certain that Pride, Covetousness, Ambition, &c. which cause all discontent, and disturbance of mind in us, are nothing else but the Irregularities and Excesses of Passion; for the excess of self-love is *Pride*, the extravagancy of desire or delight in the Honours or Profits of this world, *Ambition*, *Covetousness* &c. So that *Pride*, *Covetousness*, *Ambition*, *Intemperance*, &c. really causing all discontents; and these being nothing but the irregularities of Passion; we must conclude the irregularity of Passion the Cause of all our Discontent,

1. A man ought therefore to disburden himself of these original foundations of folly and misery, to give a Law to the Sensitive Appetite, bring it into Subjection,

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and

and keep it within just limits and bounds, under the discipline and rules of Reason and Religion: which is the next thing to be proved.

2. 'Tis the Duty, I say of every Rational creature to Subdue, Govern, and Regulate his Passions, and to keep them in, that they may be in subjection, not in dominion; may serve, not rule.

The Sensitive Appetite (to which the Passions belong) is the Inferiour part of the Soul, answerable to the dreggs of the people in a Government; of themselves indeed apt to be heady, tumultuous, unruly, and factious, if not restrained by a Superiour power. Now God has committed this Appetite, with its Passions, to the Rule and Guidance of the Rational Soul, to the Government of the
Judg-

Judgment and Understanding. It is therefore an Absolute and Necessary duty in the Soul or Mind, to exercise a due austere rule and superintendency over these subjects, and by no means to suffer them (through want of vigilancy and severity in its Administration) to usurp and prevail over the Judgment and Reason, and so invert the very order of Nature, by suffering the whole unhappy man to be carried to serve the brutish lusts of an insolent and licentious Appetite. She ought not to let them swerve from their due submission and conformity, lest they become rebellious, and bring in confusion and disorder upon the whole Man. No, as God Almighty hath substituted the Soul of man as his Vicegerent in this Province which he hath committed to it, so

he expects an account of the management of his Trust, and will certainly punish the Soul for the male-administration of its government. We are therefore under a great and strong obligation to improve and govern this Province to the glory of God. We ought to resolve and practise severity over our unruly Appetites, to bring our Passions into order and obedience, to refuse to gratifie their intemperate desires ; to keep them in awe and under discipline, and so reduce the whole *Province* to a due constant subjection.

Again, the Sensitive appetite is common to us with Brutes, and its inclinations, lusts, and affections are in a great measure the Law in them and us. If men therefore set up their Passions for the Rule and Guide of their Actions, if they will yield to the craving

ing of an importunate, inordinate, sensual Appetite, and to serve and obey their lusts ; they are no way superiour to the very Beasts that perish. Now Almighty God having given to Mankind a higher and a nobler Faculty, it ought in the very order of Nature to govern, guide, moderate, and direct that inferiour part which is common to us with Brutes : and that man that keeps not this Government and Rule of his nobler Nature over the lower Faculties of his soul, degrades himself below the Dignity of a *Man*, and having forfeited all the Royal Prerogatives of his Rational nature, debases himself to a parity with Beasts, nay and below them too ; for even these restrain their Appetites from Excess and Immoderation.

How admirably great and excel-

lent seems that noble temper of mind, which is, appositely enough, called *Equality of Humour*! When a man keeps so much freedom and liberty in his soul, as never to be disquieted; but as you leave him, so you find him, always indifferently cheerful, and ever the same. For is he rich, prosperous, great? yet he continues safe, because he is still humble, thankful, watchful lest he should be deceived, or transported; careful, lest he should be carried into Pride, Arrogance, Insolency, Presumption. Is he poor, neglected, unfortunate? Yet he remains patient, humble, contented, thankful, depending upon that God he fears, looking up to the great Lord of Heaven and Earth, as knowing that he observes and eyes all men, and that his Providence governs all things. And this

this keeps him still even and square without any considerable Alteration, whatsoever his condition be. His soul is lifted up above all those inconsiderable toys the world ranges under, the smiles and frowns of Fortune; and relishes more happiness in a peaceable and quiet spirit, a comfortable serenity of soul, than he could do in the enjoyment of all that others court with so much eagerness and ardour. How wonderfully happy is this temper of mind, how infinitely preferable to the disorder and uneasiness of Impatience in most men! VVhen if a man be rich, or powerful, there is nothing more vain, proud, insolent than he; but if poor, low, unfortunate, how does he sink, and despond, and murmur, and dye under his Affliction! And there is nothing under Heaven more mis-

rable and despairing than he. We
 must conclude him therefore happy
 to wonder and envy, whose noble
 spirit does not vary with his
 Fortune: who scorns to let his
 Eyes to be always melting over a
 remediless Evil, or suffer one
 Misfortune to swallow up all his
 Joys; but notwithstanding all the
 Calamities that either lay upon
 him, or hang over him, he can
 preserve a rare and happy Calm-
 ness in his mind, which appears
 in an unclouded Serenity, that
 dwells always on his Looks, and
 discovers him ever *well-pleased*. So
 great is the advantage and hap-
 piness, that by a due rule, and
 government of Passion does accrue
 to a wise man. And I shall venture
 confidently, Dear Sir, to affirm
 that this Freedom of Mind, and
 Serenity of Soul, ought to be pre-
 ferr'd before the Empire of the
 world.

world. Besides, tis a true *Maxim* in Morality, He that commands himself, commands the world too.

I should now proceed to particularize the Passions, and shew the necessity of subduing each of them; I should likewise here enlarge upon those two known general Rules, touching Regulation of Passions, *viz.*

1. That they ought always to be determined to their proper objects. For example, We ought to love and admire nothing but what is truly good, great, & highly valuable: nor hate and despise any thing, but what is bad, mean, and contemptible: fear nothing, but what is truly evil and hurtful: hope for nothing, but what is really good and desirable: rejoyce in nothing, but what will some way or other make us better: and so for the rest.

2. That

2. That being thus rightly placed as to their objects, yet that they be not intended, nor acted beyond that degree that may justly be allowed to the objects. Thus according to the several degrees of goodness and excellency in the objects, we ought to share out unto them our love and desires. The best and worthiest ought to be prosecuted with the greatest love and veneration. We ought not to love excessively what does not deserve so great a measure of it. So likewise we ought not to be angry for a longer time, or in a greater measure than the cause requires, &c. But leaving these, I shall confine my self to those three passions, which have a more especial reference to my present purpose; *Joy, Grief, and Desire*. A due regulation of these being capable to render a man's mind quiet, and con-

constantly composed, his life comfortable and happy. Treating of them in the particular relation they have to the good things of this world. And First of

1. The moderation of Joy in the affluence of worldly things. The consideration of some present Good, belonging to us in particular, begets in us that delight which we call Joy; and it is generally defin'd to be a delightful commotion of the Sensitive soul, as it were Triumphant in the fruition of present Good. Now that we may know how to regulate our Joy in the affluence of these things we are to consider the world, and examin whether those things which our own thoughts, and the sense of the Generality call Good, be really so or no; and if so, what degrees of goodness they

they have; that we may share out to them our esteem, delight, and joy, accordingly. For as I said before concerning our Passi-
 on in general, our delight and joy in the fruition of any Good, is to be proportioned to the degrees of goodness in the object. Now we must grant that worldly things (as riches, honors, greatness, &c.) are Good in their respective uses, *i. e.* when they are honestly employ'd in the service of God, and to his Glory: and consequently we must allow a sober, moderate Joy in the fruition of them, and a chearful thankfulness to God for them. But 'tis against the Excess and Irregularity of Joy that I am speaking, and do therefore affirm, that because the Goodness and value of these things is really and truly very small and slight, our Joy in the Affluence of them
 ought

ought not to be great or excessive. For those things which are very uncertain, very casual, and withal many times extremely dangerous to the Soul, which are not capable to make us either better or wiser, can scarce be said to be Good. We have little reason therefore for any great or extravagant Joy, in the fruition of what we might as well (nay, perhaps more safely) be without than have. I shall enlarge upon this Argument, Our Joy ought to be moderate as to these things. Because

1. They onely concern this life, which is uncertain and transitory, and passeth away. These pleasures of Sin endure but for a moment; our whole Life is no more. All the Good or Happiness they do or can yield, is fading, and perisheth in the very Enjoyment.

ment. And besides, a small matter, any little inconsiderable accident may put a Period to all these pleasures, these delights, this life, in a year, in a week, in a day, in an hour, in a moment; and then these gawdy things leave us, and rather load and hinder the soul in its flight to Heaven, than further it in its Journey. A man ought therefore to have a low esteem for, and delight or joy in these transitory things; to keep himself in a constant love of Heaven, and the things above.

2. Our Joy in the Affluence of worldly goods ought to be moderate, because we ought to look upon all our plenty, greatness, or prosperity, not as our own, or the reward of our own deserts, but as the *Depositum* of the great Master of the family of Heaven & Earth,

as

as Talents intrusted with us as Stewards for our Master's use, service, and honour, not our own Grandeur or pleasure. We ought to consider, that the more we have the greater are our Accounts, and the greater our charge. That God will most certainly reward our due and prudent management of our Trust and Stewardship, and punish the contrary, and that to him we must certainly one day give an account of this our Stewardship. That we are constantly under the view and observation, as well as under the care and government of this our great Lord and Master, who expects we should be moderate, watchful, and discreet in management of these outward things. So that our delight and joy in the Affluence of them, ought not to be over-great or excessive; seeing we can find
in

in them, no just motive to advance our thoughts, nothing to create any transport, triumph, or exaltation in us, but rather matter of diligence and care how to employ these Talents intrusted with us.

3. Our Joy ought to be moderate and little, if we consider that there is a strange kind of Witchcraft in these *worldly Goods* to rob a man of vertue, and peace of conscience. They are dangerous temptations to deceive us of our Innocence and Integrity. For we have observed, that upon the increase of these things, the Generality make Shipwrack of their Consciences; become oppressive, proud and insolent, disorderly and debauch'd; perfect worldlings, as tho they had never heard of Heaven or Hell, God, a Redeemer, or a Judgment to come. Certainly there-

therefore we ought not to please our selves too much in these dangerous things, but be the more strictly vigilant over our selves, keep a strict guard over our hearts, lest Pride, or those other vices and temptations, that haunt and wait upon worldly greatness, wealth and prosperity, should steal in upon us and ruine us.

4. Our Joy as to worldly goods ought to be moderate, because, we ought to think and aim at nobler Ends, namely *God* and *Eternity*; to present to our thoughts a State of future happiness, that far surpasses any this world is capable of yielding. We are to consider that this world, and all that we call *Good* in it, is vexed with evils, with fears, with vicissitudes of sorrow and trouble, but that the happiness of the next is perfect, sincere, and unmixt with any
C thing

thing that may allay it ; we ought not therefore to fix upon this world, or throw too great a portion of love, delight or joy, upon any thing in it, 'tis all nothing, and Vanity ; but we ought to set up our Hope, Joy, Happiness and Rest in another world ; especially knowing that this lower world is only the place of our Probation, not of our Happiness ; our Inn, not our Home.

I have insisted the longer upon this moderation of our Joy in the Affluence of Riches, Honors, &c. In order to the great *Duty of Contentedness*, because in Experience we find those of all others most apt to be dejected and afflicted by the frowns of Adversity, who have already been deceived, and puffed up, with the Flatteries of Prosperity ; And 'tis certain they that think the gain of worldly things

things to be but small, will think the loss small too.

2. The moderation of *Grief* in the loss of the *Good things* of this life, is the Second thing I undertook to treat of, as a means to gain *Content*.

Grief is a sad dejected *languor* of the Soul, under the pressure of some *present Evil*. Now (as we did before) we are to see first whether the loss of these worldly things be really *Evil*, and if so we are to examine its measure or degree of *Evil*, that accordingly we may proportion our Grief. Now, I have already granted the things of this world to be some way *Good* (namely in their due and regular use) and must therefore grant the Loss of them to be some way *Evil*; (for to be deprived of what is in some measure

Good, is in some measure *Evil*,) and consequently allow some Expressions of *Grief*. But then they must have nothing of Extravagance, or Irregularity in them, they must not be accompanied with bitter invectives against second Causes, or Instruments, they must not reflect upon Gods Justice, nor revile his Providence ; but must be full of Submission, rather expressing our Humility, then our Anger. I am, I say, against all manner of Excess. For as that Value or Portion of *Goodness* I allow'd to worldly things, was slender and small, as likewise the *Delight* and *Joy* in the increase of them, was to be light and moderate ; so the loss of them is little or no *Evil* ; and consequently the *Grief* for it must be little or none ; a man is seldome sorry to loose what he doth not much value ;
and

and it would scarce trouble a Wise man to part with what is very often more safely lost then kept. For in the loss of Honors or Riches, our accounts are the less, our temptations not so dangerous, our cares fewer ; and generally in all Afflictions and Losses, our Lessons of Dependance upon God, of humility and lowliness of mind, of temperance and sobriety, of contempt of the world, of our love of Heaven, are much better Learned, then in the increase and possession of *Worldly Goods*. Briefly therefore, As the Acquisition or increase of Riches, Honors, &c. Ought not to be the object of any strong desire, or joy ; so neither ought the Decrease or Loss of them, to cause any great Grief or Sorrow. *Gods Will be done*, ought to be the Language of every wise and good Soul in relation to them.

How have the Heathen Moralists adorn'd this Subject ! How many curious Expressions, touching the Moderation of *Grief*, in their Writings ! Nay (to say nothing of those eminent Authors, who tied their Studies and Endeavours to this express Argument.) The Poets, whose Themes were generally Casual, and Light, and their Poems, the Productions of a roveing, idle fancy ; yet even upon this Excellent Subject, have they given us brave and admirable Strokes. A noble Spirit must not vary with Fortune ; for as no Condition is so high, as to be out of the reach of fears, so neither is any so low, but may have hopes. That Adversity overcome is the highest Glory, and willingly undergone, the greatest Vertue ; Sufferings being but the tryal and touch-stone of Gallant-Spirits.

That

That Impatience and Complaint shew a narrowness, or weakness of Soul, according to the old Maxim: *Invalidum omne natura querulum.* The more weak any thing is the more apt to complain. Again, the more we struggle with our Yoke, the more 'twill hurt us. That the only allay under great Sufferings is to bear them quietly, and obey Necessity; to submit to what we cannot remedy. But without enlarging upon those Excellent pieces of Morality, let us go on. We have no great reason for excessive Grief in the Loss of *Worldly Goods*, if we consider that the loss of Friends, and Relations comes from the common condition of our Nature, and from the very notion of Mortality; And can we think, that the very Nature of things ought to be changed to please our humours? The

loss of Goods, Riches, Wealth, is for the most part by Thunder, or Storms, or Tempests, or Fire; the loss of Health from the Intemperature of Air, or Meteors, &c. And can we rationally expect that the great God of Heaven should alter the settled Laws of Nature, for the convenience, or profit of such Worms as we? In a word, the Course of the world is such that Crosses and Afflictions must of necessity come; And therefore why should any man sink into despair or discontent, because the world does go, as it always did, and follows its own natural State and Condition.

Many times when I have known my Friend dead, I could have bedewed my Face with Tears, and as passionately have wept over his sacred Urn, as I ever rejoyc'd in the happiness of his Company, while

while living : But I resolv'd to lay aside my trouble ; when I had considered, that it was more Kindness in me then Prudence. For I might as reasonably have wept that my Friend was born no sooner, as that he should live no longer. Thus I cannot but interpret even that extraordinary concern, SIR, you have express'd upon my late disappointment in this College. It signifies indeed rather a deal of tenderness and affection, than (allow me I beseech you the Insolence of the Expression for once) of true wisdom and discretion. You might with almost as much reason grieve that I was ever born into the world, as that I should receive troubles and afflictions in it. This world is nothing but a heap of Cares, Anxieties, and Miseries, with which every rank of men and state of life

life is beset. *Man is-born to Trouble as the sparks fly upward*; faith that great Example of Patience, and Resignation, *Job*. So common and universal is an afflicted condition of life to poor Mortals, that it seems to be as natural as that propriety in Fire to ascend. Nay our very entrance into the world, seems to acquaint us with the Entertainment we are like to have in it ever after. Our first Minutes being attended with bitterness and pain, and 'tis certainly ominous to the remainder of our life, that we are born *Crying*.

If then no Person howsoever Good, Just, Wise, and Pious, of what Age, Sex, Degree, Quality and Profession soever, could ever yet boast an Exemption from this Universal State and Condition of Humane life; we may as justly grieve that God has given us life,
and

and made us men, as that in this life we should meet with Trouble and Afflictions, the common Lot of Mankind. We ought therefore chearfully and contentedly, to bear *these light Afflictions which endure but for a moment*, and (to speak with the forementioned Heathen Author) submit patiently to what we cannot remedy.

Give me leave now to venture upon a Word or two of Advice, in order to the preventing all excess of *Grief* under crosses and misfortunes.

1. In Reference to any cross, or ill success in business, or failure in any undertaking. Take heed of being too solicitous about the Issue of things, and of determining your self too peremptorily, to particular Events. 'Tis indeed our business to serve Providence in the use

use of means, But to God alone belongs the Issue of Things ; and that which is not within our power, ought to be out of our care. If therefore success of business doth not at first answer your expectation, let no fumes of Melancholy possess you. Use other Expedients and Addresses, but do not by any means engage your Affections too passionately in it, nor promise your self success ; so you will not be disturbed if you miscarry , which you must make account will often happen to you. For all things by nature in the Universe are subject to a continual change, and alteration : And there is no Constancy either in the favour of Fortune or minds of men ; so that no wise man can either wholly trust to the one, or depend upon the other. Expect therefore often to be disappointed, and then you will not be dis-

disquieted when the frustration comes. For what you do possibly look for, is come to pass, and what should amaze you? That which hath happened now, is but what you have often seen and known; and what should either surprize, or disquiet you?

2. Endeavour by frequent Anticipation of affliction and misfortunes to habituate and fit your mind for them, when they do come: For these thoughts will furnish you with a suitable temper, for them, render them easy to you, and keep your Soul in a due State of watchfulness and moderation, before they come. Affliction makes the deepest impression, when it surprizes us, and comes unexpected; because it takes a man upon the sudden, and before he can compose himself, or rally
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the succours of reason, and religion to support him against it. It is like a suddain disease that surprizeth the body labouring under ill humours, before it has dispersed and allay'd these humours by preparative helps, or Catharticks. And then many times more danger arises from the discomposure of the humours, then from the malignity of the disease it self. But if the mind be prepared for troubles and crosses, by a kind of Anticipation, this abates the edge, keenness, and sharpness of them, and makes them fall light, and easy upon us. Now if in that various change and revolution of events which we behold in the world, we do not look upon possible crosses and troubles as future, we lose our selves in a dangerous security, and are little better then mad-men. Where therefore we
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See at any time the losses and imprisonments, poverty, and misfortunes of others, we should presently reflect, *this, tho at present it is not, yet, may be shortly our own case.* Thus the stroke of Fortune will have less force and smart, which is wisely foreseen, expected, and provided against. By this means a man in a great measure knows the worst of them, before he feels them, which renders them a great deal more tolerable, and easy. And by thus Anticipating what we have just cause to fear, and putting our selves under a pre-apprehension of it, we learn the Lesson of Patience, and Resignation before we have occasion to use it. Thus we are prepared to entertain Affliction with Courage and Christian Fortitude, Thus we habituate our minds with a chearful and due reception of them. But

But as to this, I desire, SIR, to be rightly understood. I would not have this Anticipation so wholly to possess your Soul as to spoil the fruition, and take away all the lawful pleasures and comforts of those worldly blessings God is pleased to allow you. No ; This were to let the thoughts of *Evil* swallow up the relish and enjoyment of *Good* ; this were to let your fears drive away all tranquility, serenity and happiness out of your mind, and yet never cure nor remove the danger. As therefore the increase and possession of the many *Good* things of this life, as the height of Prosperity ought not to delude us so far, as never to think of a possible Alteration in our condition, (for tho we are now healthy and rich, we must think there will come a time when we shall be sick and under mis-

misfortunes.) So we ought to be careful, that the overmuch thought of this change and alteration, in our Condition, these possible crosses and misfortunes, do not so much possess our souls, as to make us forget the goodness of God, in bestowing these good things upon us, or neglect that duty we owe to God for them, *viz.* An honest and charitable use of them in our callings, relations, places, and stations, a hearty, chearful, and yet with all a sober and moderate delight and satisfaction in these honest, lawful, comforts of life, and all possible praise and thanks-giving to that God, that hath been pleased by entrusting us with these things, to make our lives some way serviceable to him, profitable to others, and comfortable to our selves.

Think therefore that things

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may be a great deal worse than they are now, and that however they be, you ought to acquiesce in the will and pleasure of God concerning them; but still be thankful for what you have, trust Providence for the future; and always hope the best.

3. I come now to the due Moderation of our *Desires* in the want of what the World calls *Good*. And 'tis certain that almost the whole Art of attaining to that happy, contented state of life, (after which we are enquiring) consisteth in the due regulation and government of our desires. For that mind can never be contented, that (having not regulated its *Desires*) is too furiously bent upon the world, and those things which our own vain thoughts, and the mistaken estimate of the generality
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of men call *Good* in it; that still runs before that station, and condition God Almighty hath ordered for it; and tho it attains this year what it earnestly pursued the last, yet still it will be gadding farther, and keep before its Acquests. Its thoughts and endeavours are restless, and still aspiring and aiming higher, and so it can never enjoy what it hath, because it always busies it self too much in the anxious pursuit of what it hath not. Whereas if a man would but bring himself and his thoughts into a low and just esteem of this world, and all the gawdy vanities in it; if he would moderate his desires and keep them either under and below, or at least equal with that Station of life, Divine Providence and honest Industry has allotted him, he might enjoy his Estate comfortably and happily,

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ly; and possess his Soul in peace and quietness.

Now that our desires may be within their due bounds, and not run gadding after what they ought not, nor be so irregularly bent upon things often falsely stil'd Good. We ought carefully to direct them aright, i. e. to things which we clearly and distinctly know to be really *Good*: And the only way so to direct them is, to employ our understanding or faculty of discerning (which God to that end hath given us) strictly & attentively to examine and consider, the real goodness of these things, and its measure; that accordingly we may determine our will to affect, and earnestly pursue them, or be indifferent towards them, and fix our affections upon higher, and nobler objects.

We are therefore to look strictly
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ly into riches, honours, pleasures and greatness; and consider whether they are not uncertain, deceiving things; what stability there is in them; what good they will do after death; what quietness or tranquillity they will yield us, or rather take from us; whether they have in them any real influence to make us better or wiser. And when we find (as we needs must) that they have no stability in them, will do us no good after death; we are immediately to withdraw all degrees of love and desire, from them, and set up our hopes and hearts upon more noble and more durable enjoyments.

Honors and greatness are known to be rather dangerous and troublesome, than desirable; rather Curses than Comforts and Blessings. Envy, Malice, Jealousy,

and an infinite number of sins and disturbances always attend them. They make Thrones, but uneasy Seats, and Honors no more than splendid Miseries. We ought to consider them as Gilt that covers a bitter Pill; and looking through this dress, and outside, easily observe, that it conceals a State obnoxious to danger, solicitude, care, trouble, envy, discontent, Anquietness, and infinite temptations. A Condition, which, if there happen any alteration or change in the Administration of Government, any distemper or rebellion in the Nation, or any faction among the *Grandeës*, or Insurrection among the *Vulgar*, will be infallibly hunted after, pursued, and ruin'd: So that Honor is rather a Burthen, than a Priviledge; it makes our charge and our accounts the greater; our rest, and contentment the less.

less. And we may find enough in great employments to make us sensible of the dangers, troubles, and uneasiness of them, enough to make us humble ; but nothing to make us proud or haughty, or create any great love and desire of them. To be short, the madness and folly of Greatness, the vanity of Pleasures, and the deceitfulness of Riches, make up a great part of the Writings of many Modern and Ancient Authors. I shall not then give you, or myself, the trouble of tedious proving and insisting upon that, which almost every Book you meet with will do for me. Only give me leave to insist a little particularly upon that immoderate Love and Desire of Riches, which is observable in the generality of men. The getting and increasing of Estates, is so much the Business

of Mankind, as if they at the same time in buying of Lands purchased Salvation and Eternal Happiness, to themselves. To let alone all the dangers, cares, and other ill consequences of *Riches*, still Mortality, Dearth, and the Grave terminate all the fading felicity they do, or can, yield us; and the fear, and pre-apprehension of such an end, should be apt, one would think, to sower and allay even that comfort and pleasure which these would perhaps otherwise offer. This one thought is sufficient to embitter their enjoyment, and render them insipid. 'Tis like the Worm at the bottom of the Gourd, that withers and spoils their fruition, and puts the possession of them out of the capacity of making us happy. For great cares, and great fears, can never consist with true happiness.

Riches

Riches, I grant, were to be sought after above all other things, if they brought content or peace of Soul (the greatest blessing of life) along with them. But Moralists and Philosophers do usually teach us that *Content* dwells not in Courts and Palaces, or Rich mens houses, but in Hermitages and amongst Shepherds and Swains: Where free not only from the Turmoyle, and distraction of the world, but even from all Idle, Vain, and Ambitious thoughts and desires, (those general causes of discontent.) The poor man learns seriously to view the Vanities of the world in their full proportion, and so to despise them. Where he likewise can with chearfulness and innocent joy look upon the honesty and increase, that little stock of *Goods*, God is pleased to allow him;

him ; and living in great tranquillity, and satisfaction of mind at present, for the future with an humble submission refers himself to Providence. Thus the Poor, but honest Cotrager, that patiently endures his Wants, is rich enough, and by his continued serenity of mind, invites Content to come and dwell with his humble Fortunes: whilst the greedy Miser, that spends his time, labour, life, and very soul, in scraping wealth together, is never satisfied, never content, never at rest. For Experience hath made it a Proverbial Truth, — *The more a man hath, the more he wanteth.*

And here to make a little digression.

When my late misfortune put me upon solitude, I took delight in walking alone in the Meadows
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and Pastures near this place ; to observe the simplicity, sincerity, and innocency I fancied in the Country Swains and Shepherds ; I was hugely taken with the calmness and security, as likewise with the honest pains and industry of that manner of life, where they meet not with any occasions, or opportunities of doing ill, have no alluring Temptations to sin or vanity, no Cares, no Troubles to disturb the peace and tranquillity of their minds. And here to lay my heart naked and open before you, and let you read there my inmost thoughts, wishes, and desires, I must confess, was I to dispose of my condition of life, according to my own inclination, I should pitch upon this before any other. I should willingly choose to be, as those Swains and Shepherds of old, who tined their *Oaten-Reeds*

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at the foot of mount *Ida*, or upon the Banks of *Tiber*, so much celebrated by the curious Pens of *Theocritus* and *Virgil*. And here bidding *farewel* to the Noise, Injustice, Ambition, and Inquietudes of the world, I would give up myself to repose, and solitude, to the pleasant retiredness of the Fields and Woods, where having less of Vanity, but more of Prudence, less Pride, but more Virtue, less Ambition, but more Content, I should fancy to meet with all the Remainders of the Primitive *Golden Age*, and almost all the Blessings of *lost Paradise*. Where I might without interruption not only study the Book of Nature, as delivered to us in the elaborate glosses of *Aristotle*, *Pliny*, &c. but have leisure enough more sensibly to contemplate all the Excellencies of God, which are legible, and

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conspicuous in the Creation, lose my self in admiration of those vast Moveables that adorn the highest Regions of the world, look upon with wonder and amazement, Natures curious and unimitable Workmanship in every Flower and Herb of the Field; might discern the being of a God, in every inferiour Creature, and in their fitness and convenience for man's use, read that propriety he has in them; to be short—Every where meeting with fresh Instances of the Divine Goodness, liberality, and bounty, of his Power, Majesty and Glory, of his Wisdom, Providence and Government (which are, (at least ought to be) so many Precepts to learn us, to know, admire, and magnify him, behave our selves thankfully, dutifully, and obediently towards him; so many instructions

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to teach us Resignation, Contentedness, Submission, and Dependence upon him.) Every where (I say) discerning the Admirable Instances of *Providence* and a *Deity*, I might wisely dispose and fill my mind for the reception of sublimer truths: Thus happily spending my days in Contemplation of God and his mysterious works, till I came to the accomplishment and completion of knowledge in another World, where I should spend not only my *Time*, but Eternity itself, in what I here imperfectly begun.

But to Proceed.— I could easily prove this Paradox; That, what is beyond that which is purely necessary, is useless, That he whose possessions are in a reasonable manner proportionable to the exigencies of his condition of life, and will afford him and his a competent

petent livelihood, is really rich enough. That nothing of superfluity, or redundance can be of any service or use to us, because we stand in no need of it, have enough without it. That money and wealth which is over and above what serves for our present subsistence, and the support and maintenance of our Families, is indeed our Burthen, our Care, and Trouble, but is of no more use to us in our Chests, than if it were in the Center of the Earth.

Whatsoever therefore is more than enough for our natural support, and the necessary supply of our Families, and is so employed, is in truth needless, uselefs, and unserviceable; because the only use of externals, is to supply natural necessities. Unless in an Age of Universal Indevotion, you would think of reviving that Antiquated

tiquated Custome of putting out
 your Spare-money to Charitable
 uses, as Buildings, and Endowing
 Churches, Colleges, Hospitals, &c.
 So that 'tis not the use but abuse
 of Redundance and Superfluities,
 that we may dayly observe in all
 manner of Excess, either in eat-
 ing, or drinking, in gratifying our
 Lusts, Pride, &c. Now the In-
 ference from discourses of this na-
 ture would be, that the desires of
 men in reference to this life, and
 its enjoyments, ought not to be
 lavish, and extravagant, in gad-
 ding after redundance of Wealth,
 and Riches, but to be terminated
 in things of necessity, for their
 present subsistence, convenient
 Food and Raiment for them and
 theirs; and that if it please God
 to allow us a Sufficiency and Com-
 petency for the Necessities of our
 Natures, and the honest supply
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of our Families, we have great reason to be contented with it, not onely as it is a duty enjoyn'd us, but upon most evident conviction of sound reason.

Not that any thing we say of this kind should encourage any man to be careless and remiss in his Business, or Trade, nor hinder him from imploying himself with honesty, and diligence, in that Temporal calling and station Providence hath placed him in. No, tho we ought not to set our hearts upon the conveniencies of this life, yet we are not to reject them, but to use them soberly & thankfully, for they are Blessings that deserve our Gratitude, tho they ought not entirely to take up our thoughts, or desires. God Almighty has allowed and indulg'd a moderate care to get these goods, and use of them when got, as in

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the competent supplies of our Nature with Necessities, the Provision of our Families, Relations, Dependencies; the diligent and faithful walking in our Callings, and discharge thereof: but all this is to be done without Covetousness, and a too eager pursuit after these things. And there is a business of greater importance, which without any neglect of what is necessary to be done, in order to the common necessities of our Lives and Callings, we ought chiefly to place our Endeavours upon, *viz.* our Provision for Eternity, and Salvation.

I should likewise here commend that golden Mediocrity, (a state of Life wherewith I hope, Sir, you are at present blest) so much celebrated by the Heathens; I mean that safe and eligible

gible Condition, which places a man below Envy, and yet above Contempt. A condition, in which 'tis certain a man cannot by any Enlargement of his Fortune be made either more rich (in a true sense,) or more happy. For on one side a State or Condition too narrow for our necessities, of Want and Poverty, is subject to so many troubles and temptations, that it requires a very considerable stock of Patience and Humility, to undergo it; and on the other, an Estate of Grandeur, Wealth, and Power, besides its usual dangerous and deadly effects, as Pride, Luxury, Oppression, Forgetfulness of God, and Heaven, &c. it makes the person that has it onely an object of Envy to all other men; which being a busy, restless, and pernicious humour, always finding faults, ever picking, and fo-

menting quarrels, and carrying them very often to very dreadful Issues; does eternally study, and endeavour the ruine of its object. A man ought therefore with all thankfulness to acknowledge both the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God in giving him so competent, and so safe a Condition, by which he does deliver him from all the difficulties, and inconveniences, dangers, and temptations of both extreames, great Want, and great Wealth.

But if I should begin with these now mentioned discourses, enter upon the proof and enlargement that ought to be made upon each of them, I should swell too big, (the subject being very large and copious.) I shall therefore wave them, and onely desire you not to suffer your self to be too much engaged in the cares of this life, taking

taking thought (that I may use inspir'd Expressions) what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or where withall to be clothed ; but having by honest labour and industry done your part, I would intreat you chearfully to commit your self to Almighty God, *Casting all your care upon him.*

2. The Second general Proposition was ; --Tis a necessary and absolute Duty in every man to submit to, and acquiesce (contentedly) in, *God Almighty's* will and pleasure in all the several dealings and dispensations of his Providence. And that upon the account

1. Of his Omnipotence.

2. Of his Infinite Wisdom.

3. Of his Infinite Goodness.

4. Of his Infinite Majesty.

5. Of his Infinite Power.

6. Of his Infinite Wisdom.

7. Of his Infinite Goodness.

8. Of his Infinite Majesty.

9. Of his Infinite Power.

10. Of his Infinite Wisdom.

acquiesce in that will and pleasure of God, considered as an Almighty Being. --- An humble Soul, like a white Sheet of Paper, must be prepared to receive whatever the hand of God shall imprint upon it, says an Excellent Heathen Moralist. He is certainly both Fool and Mad-man, who struggles with Omnipotence, and most egregiously wicked, that while under the Rod of Affliction, dares murmur at, and revile Providence, as to the Government of the World; and does not rather correct and amend himself, and resolve to put a Period to his sins and provocations, that God may put a Period to his Punishments. No man did ever set upon a due and attentive Contemplation of the Power, Greatness, and Majesty of God, but besides his being struck into Amazement and Extasy, he would pro-

prostrate himself in the Dust, acknowledging himself to be but a poor Worm, and therefore infinitely unworthy to dispute the dispensations and providences of so great and glorious a Being. And without all doubt, if we were but under a constant, firm Conviction that he is a most Powerful, Wise, and Almighty God, the Author of all things; Present in all places; who knows our thoughts, our desires, our wants; of incomprehensible Wisdom, and irresistible Power; is abundantly able to supply us with all things, that are good & fit for us, beyond what we are able to ask, or think; that he leaves not any of his works, especially Mankind, without his special care and super-intendence over them; that he is the Great Dispenser of all things; may even upon account of his Sovereignty in-

slict whatever he pleases, upon any
 of his Creatures, having an abso-
 lute and unlimited propriety in
 them, to dispose them according
 to his good pleasure; I say if we
 were but under a constant, sound
 Conviction that these things are
 really and undeniably true, we
 should questionless chearfully and
 freely submit to the dealing and
 disposals of Almighty God, how-
 ever grateful or distrustful to our
 present sense. For how dare any
 Man murmur at the disposal the
 God of Heaven makes? What
 have you or I to do to invade his
 Prerogatives? Or why may we
 not as reasonably refuse to obey
 God in what he commands, as to
 submit to him in what he inflicts?
 Again, God hath made the Order
 and Government of the VWorld
 such, that it is absolutely necessa-
 ry that if some be rich, and power-
 ful,

ful, Great and Honorable; others must be poor, and subject, mean & neglected; If all were *equally honorable*, we should lose the very notion and being of *Honor*; because there is no *Honor* where there is no *Superiority*, (which we must not suppose in a State of *Equality*) Honor being a preference given to some persons, for their *Wisdom*, *Virtue*, or other extraordinary Merits above other men. And if all were *equally Powerful*, there would be no *Power* or *Government* at all; the very Notion of *Government* inferring *Subjection*, and *Power* supposing *Superiority*. Why therefore should not you or I be content to be of the lower sort of men, since the order, frame, and texture of the world requires that some such there must be? Or why should we be so unjust and unreasonable, to desire that the lot of

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Poverty, or meannells of Condition should be other mens, and not ours? Or if we refuse it, why may not other men with as much Reason and Justice on their sides, do so likewise? If therefore God shall please to give us Wealth, Honor, and Prosperity, we must be thankful, and careful to employ these blessings to Gods Service and Glory; if not, we are still to be patient and content; and whatever our Circumstances be, we are oblig'd under the greatest obligations of Reason and Equity to a quiet, and patient, nay moreover to a free and chearful compliance with that state and condition of Life, God Almighty hath allotted us. And our life here being (as it were) Militant, under our Great Captain and General God Almighty, our part is not to dispute or offer Council, but to obey

obey his Orders, whether it be to
 dig in the Trenches, or stand up-
 on the Watch, or Fight. Finally,
 it doth not belong to us to choose
 our parts, but to act them. And
 God appointing us time, and place,
 and the Part we are to act upon
 the Theater of the World, we
 ought to apply our selves to the
 fittest means of representing that
 part allotted to us, not to take up-
 on us to murmur and repine at it,
 especially, considering that it is
 his pleasure we should do so, to
 whom we owe our selves, and
 whose *Will* we daily pray may be
 done.

2. We ought to be content in,
 and chearfully submit to, the will
 and pleasure of God, considered
 as an *All-wise Being*.

As God Almighty is to be ac-
 knowledged the Sovereign Lord
 of

of Heaven and Earth, the great Dispenser and Ruler of all Events in the world ; so likewise is he a most Just and All-wise Being ; and therefore we ought not onely to submit to his Will, as 'tis an act of necessity, which we cannot controule, or as an act of obedience to our Sovereign ; but as an act of choice and of prudence, because our Maker is infinitely wiser than our selves, and perfectly to be followed, and obey'd. For what is chosen by the Wisdom of God must be infinitely better than what we chuse ; 'tis certainly much more prudently done to commit our selves to God for Counsel, Guidance, and Direction, than to be left to the headiness and blindness of our own counsels, and to eat the bitter fruit of our own Rashness and Folly.

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For we may (especially in some late horrid Instances) easily observe what small occurrences quite shatter, and disorder, and overturn the most politick, subtle, secret, and well-laid Designs in the world. And notwithstanding the long deliberation, and forecast, the huge prospect and foresight of difficulties, the great reserves and preparations against all imaginable obstacles; in a word, notwithstanding all the advantages of Power, Secrecy, Combination of Parties, &c. one poor unthought of Accident cracks in sunder, and disjoyns the whole elaborate Project, destroys and ruins the great Design. *God Almighty* thereby telling us, that the Actions of men, and their successes, are in the power of the Divine VVill, and teaching us not to trust to our own wisdom, in contriving and cutting out

out our own Fortunes, but to cast our care upon him, who knows better than we what is fittest for us. Now unless we could imagine our selves wiser than God, it will always be our Duty to resolve our poor, narrow, improvident wills, into the will of the most Wise God; who will not suffer any hurt or evil to befall us, unless it be for some greater good upon another account. For tho' some particular dispensations of Providence may seem unto us to be difficult and obscure, *His Judgments being unsearchable, and his ways past finding out*; yet we may be most sure, there is an excellent Contrivance in all of them; and there are special Reasons and Ends, whereby the wisdom of such Dispensations may be justified: as to quicken our Relish of, and our Thankfulness for those mercies we enjoy;

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to reach us Resignation to his Divine will; to enlarge our Experience; to prevent the Surfeits of Prosperity, and awaken as it were with Thunder our drowsie Souls, that have long slept too securely in Sin, &c. Nay, we may consider Afflictions as oft times the occasions of great Temporal Advantages. And we must not look upon them as they sit heavy upon us, but as they serve some of Gods Ends, and the Purposes of Universal Providence. Thus once a noble Heathen, after he had experienced the great Advantage his Banishment gave him, as to his Temporal Preferment, cryed out, *Periissem, ni periissem*. Thus if a man could have opened one of the Pages of the Divine Counsel, and there read the event of *Joseph's* being sold to the Merchants of *Midian*, he might with great reason have

have dried up the young man's tears. And we may from an infinite number of Instances safely conclude, that God esteems it one of his peculiar Glories to bring Good out of Evil.

So that whatever 'tis God appoints for us, 'tis not onely fit for us to submit to, but to choofe, and chearfully, and thankfully, as well as patiently and quietly, to follow and embrace. And however troublesome, uneasy, and grievous, the Dispensations of Providence are to us, we ought patiently to acquiesce in them, and wait upon God's All-sufficiency and Goodness, either to remove them in his good time, or to support us under them.

3. We ought to submit to the will and pleasure of Almighty God in the afflicting us, upon account of his *Infinite Goodness*; and this

this in point of common gratitude. For if Afflictions be certainly sent as a real favour and kindness; If (according to the Royal Prophet) *God* does indeed love those whom he chastizes; Then they ought to be received with gratitude and acknowledgment, not murmuring and repining. For the return of thanks (the least and meanest requital) is indispensibly due to kindness received; And you will scarce meet with a man so much a stranger to the common Rules of Civility, as not gratefully to resent, and acknowledge a favour done him; or so void of humanity, as to be angry or vext, with any person, for being too much his Friend. Affliction therefore sent out of *Love*, ought to be received with thankfulness. Now 'tis undoubtedly true, that Affliction cometh from *God's Love*. For its

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end is to amend and better the man; and we may undeniably conclude, that God loves him whom he does good to, whom he labours and endeavours to save, and make happy with his own Eternity. Afflictions (says a famous Moralist) are like a Friends Reproof, or a Fathers Correction, trouble the man into Amendment, pinch the Soul into greater Purity. They make us more humble, watchful and careful; draw us off from too much resting on the world; make us bethink us of our Duty, and return to God by Repentance and Obedience. Thus so long as God Almighty is pleased to afflict us, 'tis plain we are under his Discipline, under his care. No man's Condition is desperate, so long as the Physitian continues his Administration, nor is any man wholly forsaken of God nor
past

past his care, so long as he is under Affliction, for this is a Medicine, that without our own default will certainly recover, or better us.

If a Good man be not blest with Success and Prosperity, yet even his Crosses and Disappointments are turn'd into Blessings; as making him more humble, and less esteeming, this present world. An Eminent Example of this we have in the person of our late Martyr'd Sovereign. His Imprisonment was the happiest time of his life to him. There it was that instead of a Prison, he began to find a passage into Liberty and true Freedom, and those better thoughts which the croud of Business, and the Intanglements of Interest had barr'd from his mind; His meeting now with no such resistance, but being quickned from his present misfortune,

wrought Resolutions in him worthy a Christian, and a Martyr. There did the Vanity of the world, the Folly of humane greatness, with all that is splendid on this side Immortality, discover it self free from that false Varnish, that had formerly wrought too much upon humane Infirmary. This raised in him a just undervaluing and loathing of the bewitching, but deceiving Charms of this world; And this made him acknowledge Gods great Goodness to him in that restraint. Thus 'tis an Everlasting truth, that—
All things work together for the best to them that love, and fear God:
 Thus Afflictions you see come for the good and amendment even of good men, are always sent for our instruction or prevention of Sin, and 'tis our fault and weakness, if they have not the blessed effect.

Now

Now since there are few or no persons, who have been observant of *God's* dealing towards them, but are able to say from their own Experience, — *'Tis good for them, that they have been afflicted;* We have reason to be thankful for them, at least to receive them with Submission, Patience and Content. Especially considering that *God* owes us nothing, is under no obligation, no law of conferring benefits upon us, but all that we have, we have of free gift and bounty: And Morality tells us, that if we receive an *Alms* from another, it is very reasonable that we should be content, with what the other pleases to give, without prescribing to his Liberality.

The best of men are Sinners, and therefore deserve far worse at the hands of *God*, than the worst Afflictions, that do or can befall any

man in this life. If we therefore be not so happy, as we desire, it is well we are not so miserable as we deserve; if things go not so well, as we could wish they had done; its well they are not so ill as they might justly have been. And the worst we here suffer, being less than we deserve, and the least we enjoy more than we can in Justice expect: We ought in reason to be content and thankful for the least Mercy: And to be patient and humble under the greatest Evil.

There have been Examples of great Afflictions, that have befallen better men then we are. And when our Condition is at the worst, 'tis much better than we deserve, or what many others better then we, enjoy. The Evils then we suffer, being much short of our Demerit, the Good we enjoy much

much beyond what we Deserve, what absolute and indispenfible Necessity, lies upon us to be Content with our Condition, though Afflicted or Poor ! For though we want something that others have, yet we have somewhat (by the Bounty of God) that many as good, if not better, want. We should learn Contentment by considering others wants, and our own Enjoyments ; And not learn discontent from others Enjoyments, and our own Wants.

Men would questionless be patient under Sufferings of any kind, if they carried with them, a due sense of their unworthiness ; and upon a judicious account look'd upon their meanest, lowest, worst Condition, as better than they deserv'd at the hands of God. The best of Mankind may easily find, that all that which was truly Good

thro the whole course of his life, is a pitiful, slender Scantlet, and would be infinitely outweigh'd by his Sins, Omissions and Defects. And the due Comparison and Prospect of this, would quickly give him a seasonble lecture, of humility and patience. And there's no man but upon a strict and impartial search of himself, may find enough to deserve Affliction, somewhat amiss that requires amendment, some Evils growing into Exorbitancy; in a word, Corruptions enough to grow into greater Enormities; which the All-seeing God knows, and in mercy, and goodness prevents by the *Corrosives* and *Catharticks* of Affliction. So great and constant is his love to us, even in his punishing us! How many dayly Sins and Offences do we continually stand guilty of? How many

many contempts and abuses of
 Spiritual and Temporal Blessings,
 have we to answer for? And yet
 God does not punish these with an
 utter deprivation of them. Nay,
 Corruption and Vice is congenial
 with our very *Being*. In every
 year you will find the Iniquity in-
 cident to that Age, And as we
 improve in Stature, Age, and
 Knowledge, our Sins are rather
 varied, and chang'd, then for-
 laken. And yet God does not (as
 most justly he might) cut us off
 in the midst of our Iniquities, but
 spares, and gives us time and op-
 portunities for Repentance. Now
 if he be thus patient towards us
 in our sinning against him, when
 we oppose and provoke him, 'tis
 but reason that we should be pa-
 tient, in our sufferings from him,
 when he endeavours to heal and
 reclaim us.

the

To

To Conclude: Gods Love and Goodness still continues even in Affliction; for he hath ordain'd, after a few years or daies thus spent, after a few Afflictions undergone, with Christian Courage and Fortitude, an Eternal State of unchangeable and perfect happiness. And Death the worst of temporal Evils will cure all these maladies, and deliver up the Soul into a state of endless comfort and felicity.

I Promis'd, Sir, in this short Discourse to confine my self within the Rules of mere Morality, and I think I have been just to my Resolution. As to the First Proposition, about *Regulation of Passions*, it is acknowledged to be a *Moral Theme*, and that nothing almost can be writ upon that subject, which will not fall within the

the proper and peculiar Province
 of a Moralift. As to the Second
 Proposition, Touching Submissi-
 on to God, and Acquiescence in
 his pleasure, at all times, and in
 all things; I will (upon your de-
 sire) give you the Names of those
 Heathen Moralists, whose write-
 ings do Authorize most of what
 I have here set down. And how
 far bare Morality has gone in this
 point, I shall in Conclusion of all
 represent to you in the words of
 a Heathen Poet.

Juvenal. Satyr. 10.

Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus

quid

Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile

nam pro Iucundis aptissima, &c.

Beyle's.

Boyle's *Seraphick Love*, Pag. 310

Unto the Wiser God's the Care
permit,

Of what's for us and our affairs
most fit.

They will for pleasant things the
Best confer,

To whom man is, than to himself,
more dear;

We by our blinder Passions led
astray

Do for a *Wife*, perhaps, or *Children*
pray.

Which they may chance refuse us
out of love,

Knowing what both the *Wife* and
Boys would prove.

I pray God Grant that these, and the like Considerations (which I hope will work the better, because they come from your Son) may be effectual to create holy resolutions in you, Contentedly to bear what ever God pleases to lay on you. And may Heaven bestow on you such an Entire and Perfect Resignation of your self to Providence, such a chearful acquiescence in that state and condition of life, God hath placed you in; such truly Christian Patience under Afflictions, that being in a Constant Readiness, with satisfaction and thankfulness to receive whatever cometh from his Will, and always acknowledging his Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice in all his dealings towards you, your life may be as comfortable and happy, as 'tis
ca-

(92)

capable of being in this world;
and most excellently disposed for
a better in Glory. I am, with all
imaginable Duty, and Observ-
ance,

Dear Sir,

Qu. Coll.
Oxon Dec.
25, 1680,

Your most entirely Af-

fectionate, and obedi-

ent Son & Servant.

R. Simpson.

*A Prayer for the Submission to the
Divine Will.*

Blessed Lord, who knowest what is fit for us better then we our selves, and lovest us more truly then we do our selves; into thy hands I resign my Soul and Body, Will and Affections, all I am and have in the World. Deal with me and mine, as shall seem expedient to thy godly Wisdom. Leave me not in the hands of my own counsel, my own hurtful devices and fancies, as a sore punishment for my Sin: but take me wholly to thy self; dispose and order me after thy own good pleasure. And make me not only sensible of thy love in all thy dealings with me, but also thankful to Thee for the same, through Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

A Prayer for Contentment.

Almighty God, who art kind even to the unthankful and to the evil, I humble my self in the dust before thee;

be-

(94)
bemoaning earnestly the secret risings of
my heart against Thee, my vile miscon-
structions and hard thoughts of thy Pro-
vidence. Thou knowest the anguish of
my Soul; O Lord pardon, O Lord for-
give. Suffer me not, O my God, to be lost
in my own wild murmurings and repi-
nings; but draw me graciously to thy
self. Open mine Eyes, that in all these
Crosses of mine I may discern thy Love;
and enable me by thy grace to welcom
them, as so many special marks and to-
kens of thy favour. 'Tis of very faith-
fulness Thou hast caused me to be trou-
bled; O make me sensible of thy mercy.
Send out thy light and thy truth, that I
may see the wonderful blessings I enjoy,
and continually praise Thee for them.
Reconcile me daily more and more to
my present Condition. 'Tis the Condi-
tion thou hast plac'd me in: 'tis fit and
proper for me, thou who art infinitely
wise hast allotted it: and thou art ever
gracious in thy allotments, 'tis the very
best Condition I am capable of: Lord
make me thankful. Amen.

22 JY 63

FINIS.

